

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates

1858

Debates Centennial

1958

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

Chicago Tribune
February 9, 1958

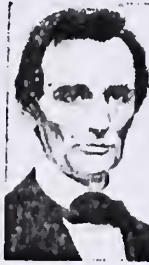
***Lincoln-Douglas Debate
Centennial Dates Set***

The centennial of the Lincoln-Douglas debates will be observed in Ottawa, Aug. 21-24; Freeport, Aug. 27; Jonesboro, Sept. 10-15; Charleston, Sept. 18; Galesburg, Oct. 7; Quincy, Oct. 11-13; and Alton, Oct. 15. In Springfield, Lincoln's "house divided" speech will be re-enacted on June 16 and in Beardstown the Jack Armstrong "almanac trial" will be staged May 6 and 7.

Historic Debates to Ring Out Again

Chicago Tribune
February 9, 1958

By Irene Powers
Ottawa, Freeport, Jonesboro, Charleston, Galesburg, Quincy, Alton . . . The word was getting around. At each successive town the crowds grew larger, more intent upon hearing the



Abraham Lincoln

lanky, homespun lawyer, Abraham Lincoln, who appeared to be a rising star in the new Republican party, match arguments on national issues with the Democrats' suave and persuasive Little Giant, Sen. Stephen A. Douglas.

Today, 100 years later, visitors to the Chicago Historical society may hear again the main themes of the Lincoln-Douglas debates in Illinois.

Two Civil War scholars, Paul M. Angle, author and acting director of the society, and John I. Tucker, appearing at 2:15 p. m. in the main auditorium of the museum in Lincoln park, are to revive, in abridged form, the great debates that affected the course of history. Mr. Angle is to speak as Douglas; Mr. Tucker, as Lincoln.

In amplification of Sunday's program, a special exhibit has been arranged in the top floor gallery which ranges from original source material on the Lincoln-Douglas debates, to manuscript, page proofs, art work and book jacket design, messages from contemporary historians and Mr. Angle's finished volume.

Chicago's precious heritage of Lincoln memories will form a veritable pageant of programs during this week of his birthday anniversary.

The City club is looking forward to its weekly forum luncheon tomorrow in the Central Y. M. C. A., at which Willard L. King, a distinguished Chicago attor-

ney who has spent many years in the study of Lincoln's life and times, is to speak on "Lincoln, the Lawyer."

Another Lincoln student, William Herzog, president of the Lincoln Heritage league, will be heard by the German Club of Chicago at a Lincoln birthday celebration Wednesday night in the Germania clubhouse.

Wednesday morning will hear the immortal words, ". . . that this nation under God, may have a new birth of freedom . . ." echoing thru the Crystal ballroom of the Chicago Athletic association, where General Henry Dearborn chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution will be gathered at its traditional White breakfast.

Mrs. Jo D. Berwick will read the Gettysburg address.

Thruout the country other D. A. R. members garbed in white will be gathering at parties patterned after the original White breakfast of the Dearborn group, which received its charter on Feb. 12, 1914.

In lighter vein, Mrs. Kenneth Barber, chairman of the Chicago Metropolitan unit of the American Women's Voluntary Services, and her board of directors are pledged to "honor



Mrs. Barber

Mr. Lincoln, come rain or shine" by turning out in spring bonnets for a luncheon conference Wednesday in the Chicago Yacht club.

For a second time in the history of the A. W. V. S., a national convention, the 17th, is to be held in Chicago. The Lincoln birthday meeting has been called by the hostess unit to plan local arrangements for the convention Feb. 24-25 in the Ambassador East hotel.



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One Hundred Years Later

"There is no reason in the world why the Negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence, the right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much



entitled to these as the white man. I agree with Judge Douglas he is not my equal in many respects—certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowment. But in the right to eat the bread, without leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, he is my equal and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man." —Abraham Lincoln in the first of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, Ottawa, Aug. 21, 1858.

"If you desire Negro citizenship . . . if you desire them to vote on an equality with yourselves, and to make them eligible to office, to serve on juries, and to adjudge your rights, then support Mr. Lincoln. . . .



I am opposed to Negro citizenship in any and every form. I believe this government was made on the white basis. I believe it was made by white men, for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever, and I am in favor of confining citizenship to white men, men of European birth and descent, instead of conferring it on Negroes, Indians and other inferior races." —Stephen A. Douglas, Ottawa, Aug. 21, 1858.

Lincoln's birthday today is but part of a national observation of the 100th anniversary of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. No political debates in American history have been more famous than these, which pitted Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas in face-to-face encounters in seven Illinois cities. At stake was the Senate seat held by the Democrat Douglas and contested by Lincoln, candidate of the still new Republican party.

In those days, senators were elected by the State Legislature. But Douglas and Lincoln carried their campaign directly to the people, debating before huge throngs in Ottawa, Freeport, Jonesboro, Charleston, Galesburg, Quincy and Alton.

When it was all over, an advisory popular vote gave Lincoln a total of 125,430 to 121,609 for Douglas. But it didn't count. The Legislature remained in control of the Democrats, who had a number of holdover members, and the Legislature, splitting along strict party lines, re-elected Douglas by a vote of 54 to 46.

The issues Lincoln and Douglas debated were the issues that were dividing the country and which were to lead, after the Lincoln-Douglas contest for the presidency two years later, to the Civil War.

Simply stated, the issues were the extension of slavery to the territories of Kansas and Nebraska; the rights of the states to regulate the status of the Negro, and, as the above quotations from Lincoln and Douglas make it clear, the entire question of the Negro's status.

The Union victory in the Civil War settled the question of slavery by abolishing it in all states and territories. But the power of the states to regulate the status of the Negro remains a burning issue, in the South and between the North and South. Moreover, in many parts of the North the status of the Negro has created racial tensions and led to disorders that are a shameful blot on America's reputation in the eyes of much of the world.

Nevertheless, the situation in America today is still a far cry from what it was when Lincoln and Douglas stumped up and down the length of Illinois. No man is a chattel, as a Negro slave was deemed to be in the Dred Scott decision. By and large, even in the Deep South, Negro rights are progressively better protected than they

were two or three generations ago. And in the South as well as the North, men of good will are constantly at work in a humanitarian effort to bring to the Negro the equality of opportunity of which Lincoln spoke at Ottawa in the first of his face-to-face debates with Douglas.

All told, Lincoln and Douglas traveled some 10,000 miles in 1858—by horse, train and packet boat. Not only did they debate together in seven towns, but they separately stumped some 70 other cities as well, including Chicago, where, in July, Lincoln and Douglas set the tones of the campaigns that were to follow.

Lincoln was nominated for senator by the Republican State Convention in June, an event which moved Douglas to remark: "Lincoln is the strong man of his party, the best stump speaker in the West." And then Douglas added: "Of all the damned Whig rascals about Springfield, Abe Lincoln is the ablest and the most honest."

Lincoln looked upon his rival with a somewhat similar respect, and while the charges and countercharges of the campaign were filled with vituperation, personal and otherwise, Lincoln and Douglas did not become enemies in any real sense of the word.

Their debates were necessarily confined to Illinois, but what the two men had to say spread far beyond the state's boundaries. Lincoln, who had been largely unknown up until that time, soon achieved a national fame equaling that of Douglas. By the time the Republican party was preparing to select a presidential candidate in 1860, Lincoln was a "dark horse" only in a remote sense of that term.

The revival of the Lincoln-Douglas rivalry—this time on the national stage—was a natural. Lincoln went to the White House and history took the tragic turn that plunged America into the bloodiest war that had been fought up until that time. The martyrdom of Lincoln will never be forgotten, for with each passing year he acquires an ever greater stature.

How fitting it would be if, on this 100th anniversary of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, there could be a repetition—with other principals, addressing themselves to the problems, domestic and foreign, that fill our lives with uncertainty and even fear.

WILLIAM S. WHITE

Far-Distant Yesterday

WASHINGTON—This is the centennial of the Great Debate of a kind that will come no more. The country perhaps is too bored and sophisticated and too full of juvenile political rock 'n' roll to listen to such organ thunder from the past.

Just a hundred years ago Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas faced in Illinois the stump "discussions"—on slavery, on states' rights, on the future expansion of this nation—that made a fork in the road for history.



LINCOLN

Douglas won the battle but lost the war. He retained his seat in the Senate. But the defeated challenger, Lincoln, rose from these dialogs in the dusty and sweaty halls of Illinois to the presidency of the United States.

Douglas was already famous. Lincoln became vastly the more famous from this contest.

What these men said formed the backdrop to what neither wanted—a civil war. But what they said will live forever as classic major engagements in political warfare.

The Library of Congress is publishing a book called "The Illinois Political Campaign of 1858." It is based on the Alfred Whital Stern collection of Lincoln papers.

It is a book made up of reproductions of newspaper texts of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Lincoln himself edited these texts. And so far as can be seen, he took out nothing except for parenthetical references to "applause" and the like.

THE ACTION OF THE CONGRESSIONAL Library is the nearest thing to an anniversary memorial to a time long gone and a controversy long since settled.

The scene evoked is strange to a political writer of the present—strange but far from unattractive. For in that earlier day of presumed widespread illiteracy, before everybody knew so much about so little, the speeches of both Douglas and Lincoln had something that has gone out of fashion now.

They had an unashamedly literary—and even a learned—quality that would repel and horrify the political ghost writers of today. Both speakers plainly believed that those who heard them were grown up, or should be.

There were no trick oversimplifications, and there was no sloganeering. Whatever slogans were attached to the great addresses—in Ottawa, in Freeport, in Charleston, in Galesburg, in Quincy and in Alton—arose naturally from them.

LINCOLN AND DOUGLAS, though well prepared for what they were going to say, obviously were of the rear-back-and-fire-when-ready school that lives in public affairs now only in memory.

Lincoln had great trouble even in assembling the newspaper clippings that alone could tell the story of what had been said in Illinois. Nobody had any press agent, or battalion of press agents. Nobody had any manager.

All these candidates had were great learning in what they were doing—Douglas in the formal and aristocratic way and Lincoln in the deceptively simple and awkward prairie way—and great tolerance toward each other.

This was the far-distant yesterday of politics. It was a day redolent of hot, un-air-conditioned assembly halls, of torchlight parades instead of television spectacles, of red-eye whisky for the audiences instead of martinis for the smooth national committees.

What price "progress"—and whose progress has it been—across this political century?

Mark 100th Anniversary of Debates

By Al Bernardi

Seven Illinois cities are planning big celebrations on the 100th anniversary of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. Your trip thru Illinois will be most interesting if you plan to visit the sites of the debates that helped to launch the fame of Abraham Lincoln.

Celebrations will be held in Ottawa, Aug. 21; Freeport, Aug. 27; Jonesboro, Sept. 15; Charleston, Sept. 18; Galesburg, Oct. 7; Quincy, Oct. 13; and Alton, Oct. 15. These dates will be marked with on-the-scene celebrations.

A commonly accepted view of the debates is that they catapulted into fame an obscure, small town lawyer who had challenged the leading statesman of the day for a seat in the United States Senate. Actually, Abraham Lincoln was far from obscure at the time of the debates.

In 1858 he was the recognized leader of the Republican party in Illinois. Outside his home state this recognition was enough to give him 110 votes for vice president in the Republican National convention of 1856, even tho he had not sought that office.

At the May term of the Cass circuit court in 1858, Lincoln received widespread publicity for his defense of Duff Armstrong in the famous "almanac" murder trial. In June, the Republican state convention assembled in Springfield passed a resolution making Abraham Lincoln the "first and only choice of the Republicans of Illinois for the United States Senate, as the successor of Stephen A. Douglas." Lincoln's address to that convention is now known as the "House Divided" speech.

On July 24, 1858, Lincoln wrote to Douglas asking him if it would be agreeable "to make an arrangement for you and myself to divide time, and address the same audiences during the present canvass?"

Great Debate at Charleston



Artist's conception of the fourth Lincoln-Douglas debate at Charleston, Ill., Sept. 18, 1858.

Douglas accepted and as the challenged party had the privilege of designating the number and locations of the joint meetings.

As proposed by Douglas and accepted by Lincoln, meetings were to be held at Ottawa Aug. 21; Freeport Aug. 27; Jonesboro Sept. 15; Charleston Sept. 18; Galesburg Oct. 7; Quincy Oct. 13; and Alton Oct. 15.

The campaign opened at the Tremont House in Chicago July 9, 1858. Douglas spoke there and Lincoln replied the following night from the same balcony of the Tremont.

The debates were widely carried by the press and received nation-wide publicity. In appearance the two men presented sharp contrasts. Lincoln, the tall sucker, and Douglas, the little giant. Lincoln's voice and speaking style was described as a "thin tenor, or rather falsetto, almost as high pitched as a boatswain's whistle." It could be heard farther and had better wearing quality than Douglas' rich baritone, but it was not as impressive to listeners.

A New York paper observed, "Douglas is no beauty but he certainly has the

advantage of Lincoln in looks. Very tall and awkward, with a face of grotesque ugliness, Lincoln presents the strongest possible contrast to the thick set, burly bust and short legs of the judge."

During the campaign, Douglas traveled 5,227 miles in 100

days. Lincoln, in less than four months, covered 350 miles by boat, 600 by carriage, 3,400 by train for a total of 4,350 miles. Douglas rode in a special train boasting a flat-car which mounted a 6 pound cannon to summon the populace when the Little Giant arrived at a station.

Estimates of Lincoln's expenses were near \$1,000 while Douglas' were said to be near \$50,000. The 10 week campaign put a severe physical strain on both men. The weather varied from hot, steamy August days to days of continuous rain, and several days when coats and shawls were needed.

Election day, Nov. 2, 1858, was cold and wet. Lincoln carried Douglas' home county of Cook and Douglas carried Lincoln's county of Sangamon. Altho Lincoln received a majority of the votes, the old apportionment law made it necessary for the northern counties to turn out 1,000 voters to offset 750 in southern Illinois. In the legislature on Jan. 5, 1859, Douglas received the 54 Democratic votes, the 46 Republican votes went to Lincoln.

On hearing the news Douglas wired the editor of the Democratic State Register, "Let the voice of the people

rule.' Two weeks later, Lincoln wrote: 'But let the past as nothing be. For the future my view is that the fight must go on.'

The fight did go on, with Lincoln emerging victorious over Douglas, John C. Breckinridge, and John Bell for the Presidency of the United States in 1860..

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So, if you desire a bit of history and local color with your travel in Illinois you can get it at the sites and on the dates mentioned at the beginning of this article. To give you a thumbnail sketch of the events it should be mentioned that Ottawa will hold an antique car parade and children's parade, as well as a re-enactment of the debate.

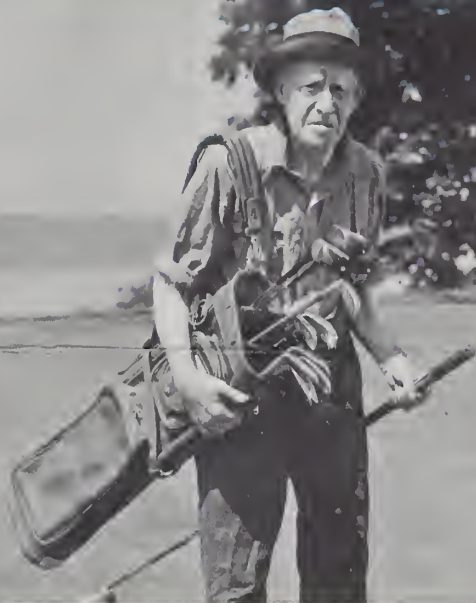
At Freeport there will be a re-enactment of the debate, parades, pageant, centennial ball, a reception, and antique shows. Jonesboro will have a centennial parade in conjunction with the Illinois State Forest festival.

A parade and square dance will be held at Charleston. Galesburg will have Carl Sandburg as a speaker, as well as a re-enactment of the famous debate. Quincy will present a pageant and a re-enactment. Alton also has planned a re-enactment of the debate held there.

Lincoln LIFE

Number 3 1958

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The Lincoln-Douglas Debate Centennial

By Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Director
The Lincoln National Life Foundation and
Museum in the Home Office

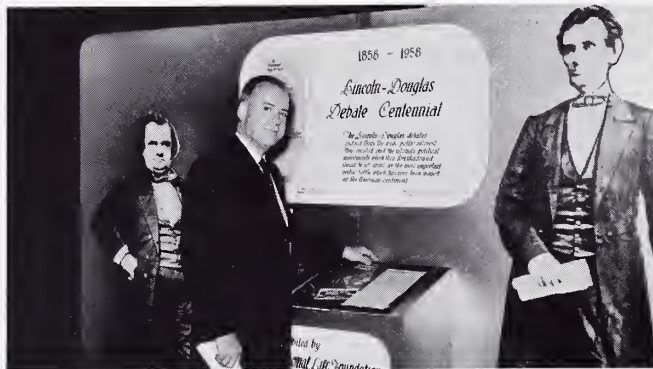
Two great debates stand out in the history of American politics, the Webster-Hayne discussion of 1830 and the Lincoln-Douglas contest of 1858. While lacking the literary merit and formal presentation of the earlier argument, the Lincoln-Douglas series, judged from the wide public interest it created, and the ultimate political movements which it foreshadowed, should be set apart as the most important verbal battle ever waged on the American continent.

This year the Lincoln-Douglas Debate Centennial will be celebrated from August through October. The debates were held in seven Illinois towns on the following dates: Ottawa—August 21, Freeport — August 27, Jonesboro — September 15, Charleston —

September 18, Galesburg — October 7, Quincy—October 13, Alton—October 15.

The Freeport debate, the second of the series is considered the most important because on this occasion Stephen A. Douglas answered a question put to him by Abraham Lincoln regarding slavery in the territories. In 1857, the United States Supreme Court had declared that Congress did not have the right to pass laws concerning slavery in the territories. Lincoln asked Douglas how he could support “popular sovereignty” when it was contrary to the decision of the Supreme Court. Douglas replied that despite the verdict of the Supreme Court, the people of a territory could pass laws that would in effect bar slavery from their territory. This reply re-elected Douglas senator in 1858 but lost him the support of the South, thus paving the way for Lincoln’s election to the presidency in 1860.

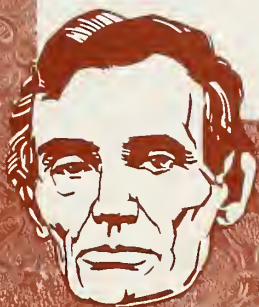
Dr. McMurtry stands beside a display featuring mementos of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates from the files of the Lincoln Museum in the Home Office. This display will be shown in various cities where the 100th anniversary of the debates is being celebrated.





*Abraham
Lincoln's
Scrapbook
of his
Debates with
Stephen A.
Douglas*

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LINCOLN'S ONLY BOOK

Here for the first time is presented a complete reproduction of the scrapbook which Abraham Lincoln used as his personal record of the debates with Stephen A. Douglas in 1858. The publication of the debates two years later, employing this scrapbook as printer's copy, set Lincoln's basic beliefs before the public and forwarded his advance to the Presidency of the United States. One eminent Lincoln authority has called the scrapbook the "manuscript of the only book that Lincoln wrote or edited or prepared for publication."

FROM THE ALFRED WHITAL STERN COLLECTION

The scrapbook, owned by Alfred Whital Stern and placed by him in the Library of Congress, contains nearly a hundred leaves, on which reports of the debates which Lincoln took from Chicago newspapers—his own speeches from the *Press and Tribune*, which he regarded as presenting his words most reliably, and Douglas' from the *Times*, which was partisan to his rival—were carefully mounted. Lincoln's brief emendations and notes for the printer may be seen throughout.

COLLOTYPE FACSIMILE REPRODUCTION

The colotype facsimile, faithfully reproducing the original, has an introduction by David C. Mearns, Chief of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, giving an account of how the scrapbook came to be compiled and the uses to which Lincoln put it. It is published in the centennial year of the historic debates.

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The facsimile volume may be ordered from the Library of Congress, Washington 25, D. C., for \$10 a copy. A dealer's discount is given on bulk orders. Checks or money orders should be made payable to the ~~Library of Congress~~ ^{Treasurer of the U. S.} A convenient order blank is on the back of this folder.

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